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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR
DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: EUR/SCE DIRECTOR HOH PRESSES KOSOVAR
INTERLOCUTORS TO FOCUS ON TRANSITION ISSUES

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Visiting EUR/SCE Office Director Chris Hoh reassured anxious Kosovo Albanian leaders that the USG still supports resolution of Kosovo's final status by the end of the year, but asked them to help manage expectations within the population if Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari decides a delay is necessary. UNMIK representatives warned that Ahtisaari must keep to his original timeline in order to provide the momentum necessary to stave off destabilizing actions by extremist fringe groups. Hoh told government and opposition leaders that after final status is resolved, they would be judged on how well they are able to govern on transition day. Moderate Kosovo Serb leader Randjel Nojkic was upbeat on the possibility of Serbs staying in Kosovo and entering Kosovo institutions after the decision on final status. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) EUR/SCE Office Director Chris Hoh met in Pristina on October 16 with various members of the Kosovo Negotiating Team's Political Group, Negotiating Team Coordinator Blerim Shala, SRSG Joachim Ruecker, Kosovo Serb leader Randjel Nojkic, President Fatmir Sejdiu's principal advisor Skender Hyseni, local EU representative Torbjorn Sohlstrom and COMKFOR Chief of Staff General Albert Bryant. Hoh also met on October 15 with Father Sava at Decani Monastery to discuss the exclusion zone around the monastery.

Concern over Serbian Referendum, Possible Delay

13. (C) Kosovo Albanian politicians all expressed anxiety over the proposed referendum on October 28-29 on a new Serbian constitution containing provisions ostensibly tying Kosovo to Serbia and the fear that Serbia's internal politics could cause a delay or postponement in the resolution of Kosovo's final status. President Sejdiu's Advisor Skender Hyseni said that the Negotiating Team and the Kosovo government have managed these two basic concerns publicly, saying that Serbia's holding of the referendum -- even in Serb enclaves in Kosovo -- will have no influence on the status decision. He added that privately, however, most senior Kosovo politicians consider the referendum to be a serious provocation by Serbia.

¶4. (C) Hyseni also noted his belief that, although the Kosovo government has no concrete information on a delay in the current plan by Special Envoy Ahtisaari to deliver his recommendations on Kosovo's status before the end of the year, a delay may in fact be imminent once the Serbian electoral calendar is determined. If that happened, Hyseni said, the Kosovar leadership would find a way to sell it to the public, provided there are clear statements from the USG and the Contact Group on the limited nature of any delay. SRSR Ruecker reiterated this theme, asking that the contact Group keep to the 2006 timetable, but assuring Hoh that a short delay could be managed if it were not open-ended.

¶5. (SBU) Members of the Political Group with whom Hoh met agreed that implementation of the settlement agreement is the biggest challenge facing Kosovo. They also expressed confidence in U.S. ability to lead the final status process and asked for a strong U.S. presence in the planned international civilian presence after UNMIK departs. Enver Hoxhaj from the opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo worried about the fate of the divided city of Mitrovica, but Ardian Gjini, Minister of Environmental and Spatial Planning from the junior coalition partner Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, warned against any artificial attempt to reunite the divided halves of the city as part of the settlement, arguing that time would help bring the two sides closer together.

Transition Process, Implementation of Settlement Critical

¶6. (C) SCE Director Hoh pressed all interlocutors on the essential need to get the post-UNMIK transition process underway, and for the Kosovar government to be ready to accept responsibilities from UNMIK once it departed. Hoh

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underscored that the Kosovo government would be judged harshly by its citizens if it could not provide effective services in the days immediately following its formal assumption of new authorities. He used his meeting with SRSR Ruecker and PDSRSR Schook to stress the need to work closely with the Kosovo government and the planning team of the proposed International Civilian Office (ICO) to transfer UNMIK's remaining competencies over the next several months. SRSR Ruecker agreed strongly, saying that his emphasis with the Kosovar leadership was to focus not on status, but on implementation of the Standards for Kosovo and the eventual transition from UNMIK to Kosovo government institutions.

¶7. (C) KFOR COS General Bryant outlined for Hoh KFOR's view that its primary security concerns are not in the north, but rather in the southern Serb enclaves. Regarding the upcoming referendum, Bryant noted that KFOR's posture would be appropriate to deal with any contingency, but without being heavy-handed. Bryant noted that post-status, the EU is planning a smaller police presence than currently exists under UNMIK CIVPOL, and he warned against a loss of international law enforcement capacity, saying that KFOR was not equipped to fill such a vacuum.

Moderate Serb Encouraging on Post-Status Serb Cooperation

¶8. (C) In an encouraging note, moderate Kosovo Serb leader Randjel Nojkic insisted to Hoh that Serbs who stay in Kosovo will participate in Kosovo institutions after status, although he acknowledged it would be difficult, particularly if Belgrade withheld its blessing. Nojkic maintained that most Serbs would stay after status, though, he averred, those in the north who benefit financially from the current system of "lawlessness" would be more likely to leave after final status is determined. Nojkic said he believed that Serb President Boris Tadic would soon encourage Kosovo Serbs to participate in Kosovo institutions and that this would be enough cover for those who wanted to do so. He added that Kosovo Serbs are very skeptical of Belgrade and will easily turn to Pristina if they believe they will be protected and have their basic needs met. Nojkic complained bitterly that

the upcoming referendum was a "big lie" and that Belgrade was particularly wrong to deny Kosovo Albanians the right to vote on its provisions.

¶9. (U) EUR/SCE Director Chris Hoh cleared this cable.

¶10. (SBU) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable in its entirety for release to U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.
KAIDANOW